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Marcos Jr. arrives to appeal conviction

MANILA, Aug. 2 -- The only son and namesake of former strongman Ferdinand Marcos arrived in Manila from Europe on Wednesday to appeal a court ruling that sentenced him to nine years in prison for tax evasion. 'I had to cut short my trip and return home because of this case,' Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr., who arrived with his wife and 1-year- old son, told a crowd of media, supporters and others who awaited his return at Manila's international airport. On Monday, the Quezon City regional trial court convicted Marcos of failing to file income taxes from 1982 to 1985 while governor of Ilocos Norte, his father's home province. Judge Benedicto Ulep initially ordered Marcos arrested on arrival but changed his mind Wednesday after Marcoses' layers assured him their client would not evade prosecution. Oliver Lozano, a lawyer for the young Marcos, blamed the government for a string of misfortunes befalling the former first family. 'What happened to Bongbong I think is an extension of a pattern of political persecution because that is inconsistent with the announced government program of national unity,' Lozano said. Law enforcement agents were deployed around the airport as people loyal to the Marcoses were expected to hold a rally to protest what they believe was an unjust conviction. The rally did not take place, however. Through his staff, Marcos has conveyed that he believes his conviction was 'pure harassment' from the government. The Marcoses were forced to flee to Hawaii in 1986 at the height of a popular people power revolt that toppled the 20-year rule of the late president.

Salvador Panelo, a lawyer for the Marcoses, said his client immediately decided to cut short his European trip upon learning of his conviction and return to Manila to appeal the case. Panelo said Marcos would personally file a motion for reconsideration at the Quezon City regional trial court. He did not say when. Panelo said the judgment was erroneous because the notice of assessment of his tax delinquency was served during the filing of the case and not during the period when he encountered the liabilities with

the Bureau of Internal Revenue. A close associate of the Marcoses has expressed concern that ex-first lady Imelda Marcos is facing similar tax evasion charges before the same court that found her son guilty. The 67-year-old widow and her son returned from exile separately in 1991. In 1992, Mrs. Marcos ran for president and placed fifth in a field of seven candidates. Her son won a seat in the House of Representatives in the same year. In May, Mrs. Marcos won a congressional seat in her home province of Leyte but was disqualified by the Commission on Elections for failing to meet a one-year residency requirement. Her case is on appeal. The young Marcos lost in the Senate race.